

Magical Persistence - By Romany

*Better keep moving on, better keep moving on,
Don't let my hopes slip away.
Dream as if I'll live forever,
Dream as if I'll live forever,
Live like I'll die today.
Zoe Lewis*

What is this driving desire to create art with the tools and craft of magic, to build structures of solid wonder, to birth moments of astonishment, spun sometimes through with lyrical beauty, sometimes with rib-cracking comedy? What about this ache to burst onto the stage in a flash of colour and POW!!!... dissolve into a dreamspace of fluttering silks flown by the wind-machine, cast stars into the darkness of the auditorium... spin impossibility, send that wonder-starved audience soaring on a unicorn steed into the worlds between worlds? A blendo a wave of colour appearing, ego vanished along with travelling knots that carry mystery, a rope routine an elegant play of line and how, finishing in a harmonious chord, returned to as it was before.... with all is well and all is well, and all is well again echoing against the theatre walls.

It seems that only the enormously dedicated and truly talented magi reach the goal of creating inspired artistic magic. These few against the thousands who spend so much time, money and dreams but still end up far from the elusive goal. We all have our favourites artists. Most of us agree on Kaps, Henning, Channing Pollock, Tamariz, McBride, Ricky Jay, John Carney, Eugene Burger, (add your favourites here...) etc. but as I learnt in my first introduction to magic at FISM in Dresden 1996, these are few and far between despite the thousands of magic enthusiasts world-wide. Personally, I go out and do the best I can with my current skill level. I bring my whole energy to the stage incorporating the skills of my entire life but still, the distance between how I would like to perform and current reality is sadly much more than worlds away.

It seems to me that once a project moves from the shimmering arena of imagination to this heavier earth plane, its magic shakes off in the lightest breeze and disappears. Just as often when we discover the secret of a trick it loses its fascination, likewise once the prop or card trick of dreams is realised in wood, glue and sequins, it just doesn't seem as fabulous. Now, this is creative danger pure. A false thought process that sounds the death knell of creativity, inspiration and enthusiasm. Once I believe that everything I create in imagination will turn to dust when turned out of the workshop, then I am on the slippery slope of artistic hopelessness. And since I cannot believe that I am alone teetering on the edge of this perilous void, I would like to share with you the quotes and inspirations that have repeatedly pulled me back from the brink. The first is my favourite from Martha Graham, the contemporary dancer. She says: "There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and since there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique, and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium; and be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is, not how it compares with other expression. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open. No artist is pleased. There is no satisfaction whatever at any time. There is on the contrary, a queer, divine dissatisfaction, a blessed unrest that keeps us marching and makes us more alive than the others."

"Blessed unrest!" "No artist is pleased"... That's fine, pour me a coffee, I'm off the hook. I shall simply join the ranks of the dis-satisfied, knowing that I am on the right track and in the best company! What else to save one from despair? Well, who better than the fine Mr. Max Maven who has saved me many a time from jumping off the parapet of frustration by reminding me of the pearl. The pearl which starts life as a tiny piece of sand that so irritates the oyster, that the oyster surrounds it with layer upon layer until it becomes a priceless gem. Since we are talking thousands of layers here, that should give us some time and breathing space.

"—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . . And then one fine morning— So we beat on, boats against the current.. " -- The Great Gatsby by F Scott Fitzgerald

And back to the mirror, back to the notebook, back to the work-shop, back to making dreams into real.

*Nothing in the world can take the place of Persistence.
Talent will not;
Nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent.
Genius will not;
Unrewarded genius is almost legendary;
Education will not;
The world is full of educated derelicts.
Persistence and Determination alone are omnipotent.
-- President Calvin Coolidge*

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